

Attraction and Rejection (Part 11)

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3.6 Mere Exposure/Exposure Effect

As mentioned above, the mere exposure effect, also known as the familiarity principle, states that the more we are exposed to something, the more we come to like it. This applies equally to both objects and people (Miller, 2006). an extension of the mere exposure effect involves shared experiences. For example, many years from now in some far-off place you may meet a stranger and discover during the conversation that the two of you attended the same college or came from the same hometown or had the same kind of pet. Logically, there is little reason that this should promote liking, but the odds are that you and this other person will begin to have friendly feelings toward each other based on this shared experience.

The few exceptions to this effect include the social allergy effect and incest avoidance (Miller, 2006). The social allergy effect occurs when a person's annoying habits grow worse over time, instead of growing more fond of his or her idiosyncrasies. Incest avoidance is when a person avoids marrying children he or she was raised with (despite being around them incessantly) (Miller, R, Perlman, D, & Brehm, S, 2006). in short, familiarity and repeated exposure can sometimes make bad things worse. But the most common consequence is that people grow to like people (place and thing) that become familiar to them.

3.7 Attractiveness

Do physically attractive people get all the breaks? Yes, they do. Although most of the people will tell us that the person's physical attractiveness is not very important (Simenquer & Carroll, 1982) but when we examine how people actually respond to others, we discover that physical attractiveness plays a major role. It is another simple but potent factor that affects liking. Other things being equal, people considered attractive are liked more than people not considered attractive.

It is hardly surprising that physical attractiveness plays an important role in determining choices for dates and even for marriage partners. almost by definition we would expect that a man would prefer to date or marry a woman he considered attractive to one he considered less attractive and the same would hold for a woman picking a man. a number of studies (Walster, 1970; Berscheid et al., 1971; Stroebe, 1971) have provided evidence that supports this common sense expectation. This research also indicates that physical attractiveness is more important to men than women. in making choices both for dates and marriage partners, men are more influenced by the physical attractiveness of women than the women are by the physical attractiveness of the men. the last study listed also found not surprisingly but somewhat reassuringly that physical attractiveness is less important when a marriage partner is being chosen than in simply dating. Apparently for long term relationships, other factors play a relatively more important role.

But good looks are valued in many other, nonromantic settings as well. If, for example, students are assigned partners for dates at random, knowing how attractive each student is would make it possible to predict with some accuracy how much his partner will report liking him (Walster et al., 1966). Both girls and boys who are considered attractive are liked more. Apparently the advantages of being attractive start early. Newborn infants, who are independently judged as attractive are held, cuddled and kissed more than less attractive babies (Berscheid, 1982). While when in nursery school, beautiful children are liked more by adults and classmates, get away with mischievous behavior and attributed with a host positive personality characteristics. They are perceived as more competent than their less attractive counterparts.

Social psychologists find that we prefer the companionship and friendship of attractive people to that of unattractive people (Reis, Nezlek and Wheeler, 1980; Marks, Miller and Maruyama, 1981; Hatfield and Sprecher, 1986). Likewise, even when appearance has no conceivable tie to the requirements of a job, people with good looks are more likely to be hired, even by experienced personnel officers. And when television technicians pan of a football crowd they stop and focus the camera on an attractive person.

For men, modern clothing is linked more to displaying wealth and status than showing off the body as a sex object. women in one study were asked to rate how attractive they found men as potential husbands, dates or lovers based on seeing photographs of them (Grammer, Fink,

Moller & Thornhill, 2003). The researchers had actually taken two photos each man. In one photo, the man wore classy and expensive clothes, including a navy blue blazer, nice tie and Rolex watch. For the other photo each man put on a burger King outfit, complete with hat. Women expressed very little desire to meet, date, sleep with or marry the men they saw wearing Burger King outfits probably because those outfits are associated with low status and not much money. The very same men attracted much more interest when dressed up in classy, expensive clothes.

Body shape is another component of attractiveness and sex appeal. A so-called hourglass figure composed of a narrow waist with wider hips and shoulders is most appealing in both men and women, though naturally the widest shoulders are seen as more attractive in a man than a woman. There is some cultural variation as to what figure is seen ideal, and in particular plump women are regarded as more attractive by some cultures than by others, though being hugely obese is not regarded as lovely by almost any culture. Even within a culture, standards of beauty change. For example, the weight of *Playboy* centerfolds and Miss America Pageant contestants and winners has decreased substantially since 1960 (Garner et al., 1980).

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